CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A position detection device comprising:

one or more memories that store a set of position points defining assigned locations within one or more physical areas;

a communication interface for communicating with one or more signal sources, wherein each of said one or more signal sources is located at one of the assigned locations proximate to the position detection device, each of the signal sources having information about its assigned location, each of the signal sources comprising at least one radio frequency wireless identification tag that is stimulated by at least one signal sent from the communication interface and that returns the information to the communication interface;

a path process that defines one or more paths connecting one or more of the position points in response to a user query, the path process further accessing the information from one or more of the signal sources to determine a progress of the position detection device through the physical area as defined by the path; and

an interface that communicates the progress of the position detection device through the physical area to the user.

2. A device, as in claim 1, where the physical area includes any one or more of the following: a street, an interior of a building, a transit station, a retail store, and a town.

3. A device, as in claim 1, where the information includes non position information about the respective location.

4. A device, as in claim 3, where the non position information includes any one or more of the following information types: a building name, an address, a surname, a business name, a work place, a hotel, a restaurant, a civic directory, a performance program, a residence address, a directory of occupants, a set of directions to a next location, a warning, a designation

of one or more obstacles, a route, a public announcement, a government notice, tourist information, and exhibit information.

5. A device, as in claim 1, wherein the interface further comprises a tactile map interface that updates a tactile map to indicate a current user position and at least one direction to a destination.

6. A device, as in claim 5, wherein the interface further comprises a speech synthesis module that converts the progress from text to audio.

7. A method for determining a position of a user comprising the steps of:

storing in a memory a set of position points defining assigned locations within one or more physical areas;

communicating with one or more signal sources, wherein each of said one or more signal sources is located at one of the assigned locations proximate to a position detection device, each of the signal sources having information about the respective assigned location, each of the signal sources comprising at least one radio frequency wireless identification tag that is stimulated by at least one signal sent from the communication interface and that returns the information to the communication interface;

defining one or more paths connecting one or more of the position points in response to a user query;

accessing the information from one or more of the signal sources to determine a progress of the position detection device through the physical area as defined by the path; and

communicating the progress of the position detection device through the physical area to the user.

8. A method, as in claim 7, wherein the step of communicating further comprises the step of updating a tactile map to indicate a current user position and at least one direction to a destination.

9. A method, as in claim 8, wherein the step of communicating further comprises the step of converting the progress from text to audio.

10. A system for determining a position of a user comprising:

means for storing in a memory a set of position points defining assigned locations within one or more physical areas;

means for communicating with one or more signal sources, wherein each of said one or more signal sources is located at one of the assigned locations proximate to a position detection device, each of the signal sources having information about the respective assigned location, each of the signal sources comprising at least one radio frequency wireless identification tag that is stimulated by at least one signal sent from the communication interface and that returns the information to the communication interface;

means for defining one or more paths connecting one or more of the position points in response to a user query;

means for accessing the information from one or more of the signal sources to determine a progress of the position detection device through the physical area as defined by the path; and

means for communicating the progress of the position detection device through the physical area to the user.

11. A system, as in claim 10, wherein the means for communicating further comprises a means for updating a tactile map to indicate a current user position and directions to a destination.

12. A system, as in claim 11, wherein the means for communicating further comprises means for converting the progress from text to audio.

13. A device, as in claim 1, wherein the wireless identification tag includes any one or more of the following: a radio frequency transmitter, an infrared transmitter, and a radio frequency identification tag.